GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PLANNING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2074
ANSWERED ON:14.03.2007
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR LIBRARIES
Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Gawali Smt. Bhavana Pundlikrao;Mane Smt. Nivedita;Singh Shri Kirti Vardhan

Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

(a) whether National Knowledge Commission has recommended for the setting up of a National Commission for Libraries;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the purpose thereto;

(c) the estimated expenditure likely to be incurred in this regard; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN)

(a to c): Yes, Sir. a copy of the report of the National Knowledge Commission on Libraries is enclosed.

(d): The Planning Commission has forwarded the report to the concerned Departments of the Government of India.

Recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission Pertaining to Libraries- Referred to in reply to Lok Sabha Unstarred Question- 2074 due for 14.3.2007.

LIBRARIES

Public libraries play a pivotal role in dissemination of knowledge and are an extremely important element of the foundation of a knowledge economy. There is widespread agreement that there is an urgent need for reform in the Libraries and Information Services (LIS) sector. Several initiatives in this regard have already been taken by the Government. NKC has consulted extensively with diverse stakeholders, including a Working Group of experts and professionals. NKC`s recommendations for formulating strategies in the LIS sector are as follows:

1. Set up a National Commission on Libraries: A permanent, independent and financially autonomous National Commission on Libraries should be set up by the Central Government as a statutory body to address the information and learning needs of the citizens of India. To launch the process in a mission mode, a National Mission on Libraries should be set up immediately, for a period of three years.

2. Prepare a national census of all libraries: A national census of all libraries should be prepared by undertaking a nation-wide survey. Collection of census data on libraries would provide baseline data for planning. The Task Force that has been set up by the Department of Culture for this purpose should be given financial and administrative support to implement this activity and complete the survey on a priority basis (within one year). User needs and reading habits should be periodically surveyed at the national level as part of the National Sample Survey.

3. Revamp LIS education, training and research facilities: The proposed Mission/Commission on Libraries must assess as soon as possible the manpower requirements of the country in the area of LIS management, and take necessary steps to meet the country`s requirement through LIS education and training. To keep the LIS sector abreast of latest developments, necessary encouragement should be given to research after evaluating the research status in this field. Establishing a well-equipped institute for advanced training and research in library and information science and services would provide the necessary impetus to this task.

4. Re-assess staffing of libraries: In the changed context, it is necessary to assess the manpower requirements for different types of libraries and departments of library and information science, keeping in mind job descriptions, qualifications, designations, pay scale, career advancement and service conditions.

5. Set up a Central Library Fund: A specified percentage of the Central and State education budgets must be ear-marked for libraries. In addition, a Central Library Fund should be instituted for upgrading existing libraries over a period of 3-5 years. The initial funding from the Government may be Rs 1,000 crores, which may be matched by the private sector through corporate philanthropy. This fund should be administered by the National Mission/ Commission on Libraries.

6. Modernize library management: Libraries should be so organized and the staff so trained that they become relevant to user

communities (including special groups) in every respect. Also, to optimize resources, efforts should be made to synergize the strengths of different types of libraries through innovative collaboration. NKC proposes the creation of a model Library Charter, a list of services to be performed by libraries, a Library Network and a National Repository for Bibliographic Records.

7. Encourage greater community participation in library management: It is necessary to involve different stakeholders and user groups in the managerial decision-making process for libraries. Public libraries must be run by local self-government through committees representing users of the library. These committees should ensure local community involvement and should be autonomous enough to take independent decisions to conduct cultural and educational community-based programmes. Libraries should integrate with all other knowledge-based activities in the local area to develop a community-based information system. In the rural sector, the responsibility for village libraries or Community Knowledge Centres must lie with the Panchayats. These should be set up in close proximity or on the premises of schools.

8. Promote Information Communication Technology (ICT) applications in all libraries: The catalogues of all libraries should be put on local, state and national websites with necessary linkages. This will enable networking of different types of libraries and setting up of a National Repository of Bibliographic Records and a centralized collaborative virtual enquiry-handling system using the latest ICT. To enable equitable and universal access to knowledge resources, libraries should be encouraged to create more digital resources by digitizing relevant reading material in different languages, which can be shared at all levels. Peer-reviewed research papers resulting from publicly funded research should also be made available through open access channels, subject to copyright regulations. It is recommended that open standards and free and open source software may be used for the above.

9. Facilitate donation and maintenance of private collections: There are numerous rich private and personal collections in India which need to be identified, documented and preserved for posterity. While there is a need to create a decentralized model for identification of personal collections, it is also necessary to sensitize organizations to receive and preserve donations of personal collections through a simplified process. The National Mission/ Commission may set up a committee on private and personal collections under the chairpersonship of an eminent scholar. Since special facilities for maintaining private or personal collections are not easily available, it is suggested that 10 regional centres with specific mandates be set up in different parts of the country for this purpose.

10. Encourage Public-Private Partnerships in LIS development: Philanthropic organizations, industrial houses and other private agencies should be encouraged through fiscal incentives to support existing libraries or set up new libraries. The ingenuity of civil society may also be utilized to prepare necessary infrastructure to meet the special ICT needs of the LIS sector. In order to facilitate the coordinated development of libraries across different sectors and to provide the legislative framework, required legal support and financial backing to the library sector, the Government could, in course of time, consider including libraries in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India. This should be done without in any way abrogating the existing responsibilities of the States towards libraries.